

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 9491

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IN

SUBJ: INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECHES OF PRIME MINISTER GANDHI
AND PRESIDENT GIRI

BEGIN SUMMARY: PUBLIC ATTITUDES ON THE 26TH ANNIVEGPARY
OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE ARE GLOOMY ABOUT THE COUNTRY'S
ECONOMIC SITUATION AND ABOUT THE CAPACITY OF ITS LEADERS
AND POLITICIANS TO GRAPPLE EFFECTIVELY WITH ITS MANY
PROBLEMS. THERE IS GREAT UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE,
AND INDIAN COMMENTATORS ARE REFLECTING LOSS OF INDIAN
SELF-CONFIDENCE. INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECHES BY PRIME
MINISTER GANDHI AND PRESIDENT GIRI WERE SOMBER IN TONE
AND CONTAINED NUMEROUS EXHORTATIONS TO TIGHTEN BELTS, TO
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BE PATIENT WITH DIFFICULTIES, AND TO HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT
HARD WORK AND COOPERATION WOULD ENABLE INDIA TO OVERCOME
OBSTACLES AS IN THE PAST. END SUMMARY.

1. MRS. GANDHI'S INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH CONCENTRATED ON THE BLEAK ECONOMIC SITUATION. SHE ASKED HER COUNTRYMEN TO FACE SHORTAGES AND DIFFICULTIES WITH COURAGE AND TO BE WILLING TO LIVE AUSTERELY. GENERAL FOOD SHORTAGES IN ASIA AND AFRICA WERE GIVEN AS THE CAUSE OF INCREASED FOOD PRICES AND OTHER COST OF LIVING INCREASES IN INDIA. SHE RULED OUT THE IDEA OF A "HOLIDAY" (DELAY) IN STARTING INDIA'S FIFTH DEVELOPMENT PLAN. RECALLING THE DIFFICULT DAYS OF THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE, MRS. GANDHI SAID "WE HAVE FACED MANY TEST AND HAVE COME THROUGH WITH FLYING COLORS, ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES WE HAVE NOT BEEN TOTALLY

SUCCESSFUL. TODAY WE HAVE TO GO THROUGH A FIERY TRIAL, BUT JUST AS GOLD IS PURIFIED BY FIRE, WE SHALL EMERGE SUCCESSFULLY FROM THIS EXPERIENCE."

2. THERE WAS ONLY A BRIEF SECTION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS. MRS. GANDHI NOTED THAT NEW ALLIANCES AND NEW FRIENDSHIPS WERE DEVELOPING ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD AND DEPLORED THE CONTINUED TENSION IN THE SUBCONTINENT. SHE COMMENTED THAT IF THE INDO-PAKISTAN TALKS SCHEDULED TO RESUME AUGUST 18 DID NOT SUCCEED, EVERYONE, INCLUDING THE PAKISTANIS, WOULD KNOW THAT IT WAS NOT INDIA'S FAULT, BECAUSE INDIA AND BANGLADESH HAD MADE A JOINT PROPOSAL WHICH THE WORLD WELCOMED AS AN EFFECTIVE BASIS FOR SOLUTION.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER MADE IT CLEAR THAT EVERYONE IN INDIA MUST BE PREPARED TO JOIN IN EFFORTS TO OVERCOME ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. SHE SAID GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES THIS YEAR WOULD BE CUT BY FOUR BILLION RUPEES (DOLS 533 MILLION) AND THAT STATE GOVERNMENTS AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES HAD ALSO BEEN ASKED TO MAKE CUTS. SHE ASKED WORKERS TO REFRAIN FROM STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS SO THAT PRODUCTION COULD CONTINUE. SHE ALSO CALLED FOR MORE FOOD PRODUCTION, AND ATTACKED HOARDERS WHO EXACERBATE SHORTAGES. THESE SHORTAGES HAD NOT BEEN CAUSED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S TAKEOVER OF GRAIN TRADE, SHE INSISTED, BUT ON THE CONTRARY THE SHORTAGES WOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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BE WORSE IF IT WERE NOT FOR GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF WHEAT."I DO NOT ACCEPT THAT THIS POLICY WAS WRONG.

IF WE HAD NOT DONE IT, EVEN THE WHEAT PROCURED BY US WOULD HAVE FOUND ITS WAY TO THE BLACK MARKET," SHE DECLARED. SHE RULED OUT POSSIBLE INCREASES IN THE PROCUREMENT PRICE OF WHEAT PAID TO INDIAN FARMERS BECAUSE THEY WOULD PUSH UP PRICE LEVELS.

4. THE AUGUST 15 EDITIONS OF INDIAN PAPERS CARRIED SOLEMN AND SOBER INDEPENDENCE DAY REMARKS BY PRESIDENT GIRI IN WHICH HE CALLED FOR A THREE YEAR MORATORIUM ON STRIKES

AGAINST THE PUBLIC INTEREST. HE REITERATED COMMENTS HE HAD MADE IN LUCKNOW CRITICIZING HOARDERS AND PROFITEERS, AND APPEALED FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AT REASONABLE, CONTROLLED PRICES. THE PRESIDENT SUGGESTED THAT EVERY VILLAGE AND TOWN SHOULD HAVE A CITIZENS' COMMITTEE TO SAFEGUARD CONSUMER INTERESTS. HE ASKED THE PEOPLE OF INDIA TO REGAIN "SELF-DISCIPLINE" AND TO RETAIN CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT HE ALSO DECLARED "IT SHOULD BE THE CONSTANT ENDEAVOR OF THOSE PLACED IN POWER TO RETAIN THIS CONFIDENCE." IN A FORETASTE OF MRS. GANDHI'S REMARKS, GIRI ASKED THE PEOPLE TO BE WILLING TO SACRIFICE DURING THIS TIME OF ECONOMIC DIFFICULTY.

5. COMMENT: MRS. GANDHI'S SPEECH MATCHED IN TONE THE GREY, RAINY WEATHER IN WHICH IT WAS DELIVERED. GIRI'S FLAVOR WAS THE SAME. THEY KYALL FOR SELF-DISCIPLINE AND WILL. WE SEE LITTLE ENOUGH OF EITHER. THE EDITORIALS IN THE PRESS COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY WERE DARKER STILL. WE HAVE BEEN REPORTING IN RECENT MONTHS THE GLOOM, THE DECLINE IN SELF-CONFIDENCE, THE GROWING QUESTIONING OF POLICIES, UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE, AND DOUBT ABOUT THE SYSTEM AND POLITICIANS AS A CLASS.

6. SYMBOLIC OF THIS WAS A REPORT FROM UTTAR PRADESH PUBLISHED ON THE FRONT PAGES OF SEVERAL PAPERS ON AUGUST 15 STATING EXPLICITLY THAT AMONG THOSE OFFICIALS FROM UTTAR PRADESH FAILING TO REPLY TO THE IROUS DEMAND MADE BY THE CONGRESS HIGH COMMAND LAST WEEK THAT ALL MEMBERS OF LMRLIAMENT AND OFFICIALS REPORT THEIR LAND HOLDINGS, HAR-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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VESTS THIS YEAR, AND GRAIN SALES WERE: THE PRIME MINISTER, HOME MINISTER, MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS (K.C. PANT), THE FORMER CHIEF MINISTER OF UTTAR PRADESH (TRIPATHI), TWO CONGRESS PARTY GENERAL SECRETARIES, AND 64 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. THE UTTAR PRADESH CONGRESS COMMITTEE CONFIRMED THE REPORT.

7. GIRILAL JAIN, TIMES OF INDIA EDITOR IN NEW DELHI, ARGUES IN HIS INDEPENDENCE DAY COLUMN "WHAT HAS GONE WRONG" THAT THE TWO BASIC CONDITIONS OF INDIA ARE FIRST THE CALAMITOUS POPULATION EXPLOSION AND SECOND THE INABILITY OF THE INDIAN INTELLIGENTSIA TO COME TO TERMS WITH HARSH REALITIES. "IN INTELLECTUAL TERMS IT CONTINUES TO HARK BACK EITHER TO THE 'TWENTIES AND THE 'THIRTIES WHEN PRECIOUS LITTLE WAS KNOWN IN THIS COUNTRY ABOUT THE COSTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE NEGATIVE FEATURES OF THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION, THE DEFICIENCIES OF CENTRALIZED PLANNING, THE

INNOVATIVE CAPACITY OF FREE ENTERPRISE, THE DIFFICULTIES OF MANAGING PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECTS EFFICIENTLY OR TO THE

THE 'FIFTIES WHEN IT WAS ASSUMED ALL TOO EASILY THAT WE
COULD MOVE INTO AN AREA OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE WITHOUT
GOING THROUGH THE HEARTBREAKING HARDSHIPS OF WHAT HAS COME
TO BE KNOWN AS PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL. THE
'GHARIBI HATAO' SLOGAN IN 1970-71 WAS A LOGICAL CULMINATION
OF THIS KIND OF THINKING." HE IS RIGHT. WE WILL COMMENT
FURTHER IN WEEKS TO COME.
MOYNIHAN

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